

VZCZCXYZ0008  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #4375 3600759  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 260759Z DEC 06  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2105  
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 1808  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 7754  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1908  
RUALSFJ/COMUSJAPAN YOKOTA AB JA PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J5 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA J2 SEOUL KOR PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/COMUSKOREA SCJS SEOUL KOR PRIORITY

UNCLAS SEOUL 004375

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [KS](#) [KN](#)

SUBJECT: NORTH-SOUTH AIR ROUTE REOPENS FOR NGO

#### SUMMARY

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¶1. (SBU) The air route between Pyongyang and Seoul opened December 18 for the first time since the October 9 nuclear test. Members of the Korean Sharing Movement, an NGO engaged in humanitarian work in the DPRK, visited Pyongyang to observe the opening of a new hospital wing. The air route is typically used several times a month to facilitate NGO and official travel between the ROK and DPRK. We understand that the route has on occasion been used to deliver commodities, such as mushrooms. END SUMMARY.

#### NGO VISIT TO PYONGYANG

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¶2. (SBU) Ninety members of the Korean Sharing Movement (KSM), which distributes food, medical and other humanitarian assistance, to the DPRK visited Pyongyang by air on December ¶18. KSM Secretary General Lee Jong-soo told us on December 26 that the group met with North Korean medical doctors, attended seminars, and participated in a ceremony to open a neurosurgery-respiratory ward at the North's Red Cross hospital. Lee said that KSM has provided medical equipment and assistance to the hospital since 2003 and that North Korean officials were cooperative in arranging the visit and appreciative of the assistance. The group returned to Seoul on December 21.

#### USE OF SEOUL - PYONGYANG AIR ROUTE

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¶3. (SBU) The Ministry of Unification briefed us on December 18 that the air travel was approved because its purpose was humanitarian and not in contravention of UNSCR 1718. Later that day, Pol M/C asked MOFAT Director General for North America Cho Tae-yong to provide further information regarding these flights.

¶4. (SBU) Responding through the Ministry of Unification on December 22, the ROKG said that there have been 42 round-trip flights between Seoul and Pyongyang between January 1 and October 8, 2006. The DPRK's Kyoro Air flew 32 of the flights while the ROK's Korean Air flew the remaining 10. Deputy Director of the MOU International Cooperation and Peace Team Kim Young-sil explained that the flights facilitated 24 inter-Korean social and cultural exchanges, four inter-Korean ministerial talks, six inter-Korean economic talks, and 8 deliveries of North Korean pine mushrooms. UNCMAC records reflect that North Korea delivered 39 tons of pine nut mushrooms to South Korea in September 2006.

15. (SBU) According to MOU, customs and security officers inspect the passengers, personal baggage, and cargo pursuant to the Law on Air Flights, Air Flight Safety and Security. Customs officers use x-ray equipment to inspect for weapons-related items and explosives at entry and departure.

VERSHBOW